

Tennet language

Tennet is a Surmic language spoken by the Tennet people. The Tennet home area is a group of ten (10) villages at the northern end of the Lopit mountains, 65 kilometers northeast of Torit.

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Distribution

Tennet is spoken in ten villages. Their main town is Arilo, Loudum and Lovirang of Lafon County, Eastern Equatoria State (*Ethnologue*).

Phonology

Consonants

Tennet	
Native to	South Sudan
Region	Eastern Equatoria, Lafon County
Ethnicity	Tennet
Native speakers	10,000 (2009) ^[1]
Language family	Nilo-Saharan? ▪ Eastern Sudanic ▪ Kir–Abbaian ▪ Surmic ▪ South ▪ Southwest ▪ Tennet
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	tex
Glottolog	tenn1246 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/tenn1246) ^[2]

Tennet Consonants^[3]

		<u>Labial</u>		<u>Dental</u>		<u>Alveolar</u>		<u>Postalveolar/ Retroflex</u>		<u>Velar</u>	
		<u>Len</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Len</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Len</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Len</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Len</u>	<u>For</u>
<u>Stop</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	p	p:			t	t:	ʈ		k	k:
	<u>voiced</u>	b	b:	ɗ		d	d:			ɡ	ɡ:
<u>Fricative/ Affricate</u>	<u>voiceless</u>							tʃ	t:ʃ		
	<u>voiced</u>	v	v:	ð	ð:			dʒ	d:ʒ	ɣ	
<u>Nasal</u>		m	m:			n	n:	ɳ		ŋ	ŋ:
<u>Flap/Trill</u>						r	r:				
<u>Approximant</u>		w	w:			l	l:	j	j:		

Most consonants are members of a fortis/lenis pair, and that fortis may be realized phonetically in several ways: lengthening, change from ingressive to egressive, trilling, devoicing, and fricative hardening (becoming a stop).^[4] The fortis counterpart of the voiced velar fricative [ɣ] has been omitted. In Randal (1995),^[5] the consonant chart includes it to show the consonants in the Tennet orthography. The fortis counterpart of [ɣ] is omitted here because it is phonetically identical to the fortis counterpart of [k].

Vowels

Tennet has five [+ATR] vowels and five corresponding [-ATR] vowels. The vowels are /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/, /u/, and in the current orthography, [+ATR] vowels are marked with an underline.^[6] Tongue height may vary slightly without affecting the [ATR] quality of a vowel, so unlike certain West African languages (e.g. Akan and Igbo),^[7] the [+ATR] /e/, for example, may actually be slightly lower than the [-ATR] /e/. The [+ATR] feature spreads from right to left, so a [+ATR] suffix will cause the vowels in a [-ATR] stem to become [+ATR]. Tennet uses [ATR] to mark lexical and grammatical distinctions.^[8]

Any of the ten vowels may be lengthened. In the orthography, vowels are doubled to show length.^[9]

Tennet has two level tones and a falling tone. A rising tone is treated as a low-high sequence, because it occurs only on long vowels. In the current orthography the high tone is marked with an acute accent, falling is marked with a circumflex, and low is unmarked.^[10] Tone often marks grammatical relations and occasionally marks lexical distinctions.^[11]

Morphology

Like its closer Surmic relatives, Tennet uses multiple strategies to mark number on nouns.^[12]

- Singular suffix: Nouns that refer to things that usually occur in groups (e.g. teeth, leaves)
- Plural suffix: Nouns referring to things that usually occur singly (e.g. turtle, carotid artery)
- Singular suffix to mark singular and plural suffix to mark plural (e.g. pipe, waterbuck)
- Tone change
- Stem change (rare)

The number marking system is quite similar to that of Murle, for which Arensen^{[13][14]} has proposed semantically based categories to group nouns that use the same strategy for marking number.

Tennet has a marked nominative system, where a noun takes a suffix when it is the subject of either a transitive or intransitive verb. A noun serving as a direct object is unmarked, and so are citation forms.^[15]

In an equational clause with an implicit "be" verb, both nouns are left unmarked (the accusative form).^[16]

Like other Surmic languages, Tennet uses a modified vigesimal counting system. "Six" is derived from "five and one," "seven" from "five and two," etc. "Ten" is a new word, followed by "ten and one," "ten and two," up to "ten and five and four," after which is a new word for "twenty," which means "a person" (10 fingers and 10 toes). "Forty" is "two people," sixty is "three people," etc.

Syntax and Typology

Tennet has a basic VSO word order.^[17] As is the case with other Surmic languages, Tennet's word order for interrogative clauses is typologically surprising. Greenberg's Universal 12 predicts that for VSO languages, interrogative words will be sentence-initial,^[18] but Tennet and its relatives have sentence-final interrogative words.^[19]

The language has a category of words that have been analyzed as postpositions. If that is what they are, Tennet syntax contains another typological anomaly, since Greenberg's Universal 9 predicts prepositions for VSO languages. However, these postposition candidates also have some noun-like characteristics (case marking), and certain constructions containing indisputable nouns parallel the apparent postpositional constructions quite nicely.^[20]

References

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3. Randal (1995:5)
4. Randal (1998:221)
5. Randal (1995:5)
6. Randal (1998:220)
7. Kenstowicz (1979:247-248)
8. Randal (1995:10)
9. Randal (1995:11)
10. Amargira (2011)
11. Randal (1995:74)
12. Randal (1995:30)
13. Arensen (1992)
14. Arensen (1998)
15. Randal, S. (2000:70)
16. Randal, S. (2000:72)
17. Randal (1995)
18. Greenberg (1966:111)
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20. Randal, A. (2000:64)

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External links

- World Atlas of Language Structures information on Tenneset (http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_code_ten)
 - Tenneset basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database (<http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\esu\srm&first=0>)
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